

Whole Food Supplements vs. Nutri-chemical Supplements

(i.e. natural or synthetic vitamins)

It could be argued that never in history has so much money been spent on the advertising and purchasing of any merchandise, with so little knowledge of the product itself. On the part of either the seller or the buyer, as has been spent on vitamin and mineral supplements.

Billions are being spent annually, and most of the purchasers, wholesalers, retailers or direct to the consumer salespeople do not know the difference between a synthetic a crystalline and a truly natural vitamin, or the difference between a chelated organic and inorganic mineral.

Neither seller nor buyer know little of how supplements are made, their characteristics, their attributes, their sources, their uses, their advantage and disadvantages and how to tell one from another by reading a label.

So let's take a closer look at what we spend so much money on in good faith that the product we buy must be good for us, right? After all it says, "natural", so what could be wrong with a vitamin or a mineral?

What's the Difference Between Natural and Synthetic Supplements?

In short, it's the difference between something that's living and something that's dead. That is a Big Difference. There are three categories that you can buy vitamins/minerals and it's Really Important that you understand the difference.

1. Natural Supplements (or crystalline supplements)

Crystalline means that a Natural Food has been treated with various chemicals, solvents, heat and distillations to reduce it down to one specific "pure" crystalline vitamin. In this process all the synergists, which are termed "impurities" are destroyed. There is no longer anything natural in the action of crystalline "vitamins" – they should more accurately be termed drugs.

2. Synthetic Supplements

Synthetic means that a chemist attempts to reconstruct the exact structure of the crystalline molecule by chemically combining molecules from other sources. These sources are not living foods, but dead chemicals. For example, the Vitamin B1 is made from a coal tar derivative and d-alpha tocopherol (so called Vitamin E) is a by product of materials used by the Eastman Kodak company to make film. However, it is not legally necessary to give the source from which the synthetic "vitamin" is derived. Synthetic "vitamins" should more accurately be called drugs.

3. Organic Whole Food Supplements

On vitamin labels the word “natural” has no specific definition other than that the substance exists somewhere on the planet. The key words to look for are “Whole Food Vitamins”. This means vitamins as they are found in food, untampered with in any way that would change their molecular structure, their biological or biochemical combination or their actions.

Vitamins in their natural state always exist as living complexes with specific synergist co-factors, enzymes, phytonutrients and organic mineral activators and never as isolated single factors.

A vitamin needs all of its synergists to function and furthermore, there are literally hundreds of such synergists, most of which have not yet been studied but are nevertheless very important.

There is only one source in the Western hemisphere that makes pure, organically grown, whole foods supplements and that is Standard Process. We’ve had patients come in saying that they are taking supplements made from whole foods, but it is actually a nutraceutical made from a whole food source and it’s tricky to be able to tell the difference. One way to tell the difference is reading the label where the amount of the vitamins are listed. For example, Vit. E will commonly read 400 or 800 IU’s. It’s not possible to get this level from a whole food, even if it is concentrated as in Standard Process’s whole food formula of Vitamin E.

We’ve also seen labels that have nutri-chemicals listed as well as additional nutrients like wheat grass or spirulina and this would be a whole food, but not the nutri-chemicals.

Advertising is amazingly deceiving and it takes a shrewd consumer to educate oneself to what is actually contained in the packaging and marketing of foods and nutritional supplements.